



NEWS

Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BURKE TO ANNOUNCE AVAILABILITY OF \$1 MILLION TO ASSIST AGENCIES IN INVESTIGATING IDENTITY FRAUD CASE BACKLOG IN L.A. COUNTY

Funds are intended to strengthen collaborative effort by the Sheriffs Department, District Attorney's Office and Consumer Affairs to prosecute ID theft offenders

LOS ANGELES COUNTY—Supervisor **Yvonne B. Burke** will join Sheriff **Lee Baca**, District Attorney **Steve Cooley**, Department of Consumer Affairs Director **Pastor Herrera, Jr.**, and identity theft victims to announce the availability of much-needed resources and a collaboration to investigate and prosecute the County's growing number of identity theft cases.

WHEN: Wednesday, September 27 at 1 p.m.

LOCATION: Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 W. Temple Street, Los Angeles, Room 864 (8th Floor)

Identity theft in Los Angeles County grew to more than 25,000 cases last year and is on pace to surge even more this year as one of the region's fastest-growing crimes. The problem, Burke says, is that only a fraction of the cases are prosecuted. "We want to get the message out to residents of the county that ID theft is a very serious and growing crime and that we are taking this seriously," said Burke, who herself was a victim of identity theft.

Nearly two years ago, someone bought a Mercedes-Benz in Beverly Hills using personal information from Burke and her husband. "While identity theft is not a violent crime that demands immediate response from law enforcement agencies, it's serious enough to cause undue emotional distress and negatively impacts someone's credit," explained Burke.

In June, the Second District office took the lead in asking the Board of Supervisors to direct the County's Department of Consumer Affairs, with oversight by the Chief Administrative Officer, to work in collaboration with the DA's Office to examine the feasibility of increasing resources to investigate and prosecute identity theft offenders.

"Given the significant number of identity theft occurrences, particularly in our senior citizen population, it is imperative that the County of Los Angeles take a leadership role in combating this problem," Burke said.

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About Identity Theft in Los Angeles County

The Board of Supervisors today approved a request by Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke for \$1 million to increase resources to create an Identity Theft Division within the Department of Consumer Affairs. The funds are also intended to strengthen the County's collaborative efforts by enhancing resources and adding personnel to the Sheriffs Department and District Attorney's Office.

In 2005, the Federal Trade Commission's Identity Theft Clearinghouse identified 255,565 reported cases of identity theft—of which 45,175 of those victims who reside in California. The ID-theft caseload in the District Attorney's Office has skyrocketed from zero in 1997 to 1,515 cases last year.

The types of reported fraud range from credit card and wireless phone accounts to fraudulent receipt of loans and government entitlement programs. Experts estimate identity theft costs businesses and consumers more than \$50 billion a year nationwide as thieves fraudulently use others' personal information - such as Social Security and driver's license numbers - to obtain everything from credit cards to goods and services.

In many instances, victims of identity theft spend countless hours filing police reports, responding to collection agencies and contesting inaccurate credit reports. In many cases, it may take several years before a victim can substantially restore their good credit.

The collaboration to investigate the backlog of identity fraud cases in L.A. County includes participation of the **Sheriffs Department's** High Tech Crimes and Identity Force Theft Unit, **District Attorney's** investigators and the Department of **Consumer Affairs**.

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